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BY LAURA COOPER HALL

FAMILY PLANNING HIGH IMPACT PRACTICES CAN IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR POPULATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMS

When population, health, and environment (PHE) projects use HIPs, they can direct their family planning resources more effectively to achieve greater impact.

To strengthen their family planning activities' impact, PHE projects should strategically consider how to leverage High Impact Practices (HIPs).

By measuring and reporting HIP results, PHE projects could contribute to the growing HIPs evidence base, benefiting the PHE and family planning communities.

Experts in the family planning sector have developed a set of evidence-based practices—known as Family Planning High Impact Practices (HIPs)—that improve family planning and reproductive health program outcomes (see Box 1). HIPs can also be applied in development programs that integrate multiple sectors at the community level, including family planning. A promising opportunity exists to expand the use of HIPs within population, health, and environment (PHE) projects.

PHE projects are integrated community-based projects that reach populations in ecologically rich areas with activities that improve reproductive and other health services and support the sustainable use of natural resources. They are typically located in remote communities where unmet need for family planning is often high.

When PHE projects use HIPs in their work, they can direct their family planning resources more effectively to achieve greater impact. Strengthening the awareness of and knowledge base between HIPs and PHE projects allows for the sharing of family planning best practices. Using HIPs in remote areas also feeds information back to the HIPs evidence base to show how PHE projects help serve the family planning needs of rural communities.

This brief illustrates how more robust and purposeful use of HIPs can lead to better family planning outcomes for PHE projects, and how PHE projects' use of specific HIPs provides a valuable opportunity to enhance the HIP knowledge base.

PHE Projects Already Use Elements of HIPs

Most PHE projects carry out activities that align with elements of select HIPs, even if the activities are not identified as or deliberately tied to HIPs (see Table, page 2).

Many PHE projects implement activities that align with elements of HIPs in the **Enabling Environment** category through policy work with decisionmakers like ministers or county governors.² PHE projects with a focus on sustainability often support policy

BOX 1

What Are Family Planning High Impact Practices?

Family Planning High Impact Practices (HIPs) are a set of evidence-based family planning practices developed by international family planning researchers and program experts that reflect consensus around what activities most effectively increase voluntary use of contraception. Each HIP is documented in an easy-to-use brief and has a corresponding suite of resources and tools that can be easily adapted to individual projects. HIPs briefs provide examples of successful family planning/reproductive health activities from multiple projects and tips on how to maximize family planning investments.

HIPs are organized into three categories:

- **Enabling Environment HIPs** address systemic barriers that affect an individual's ability to access family planning information and services.
- **Service Delivery HIPs** improve the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality of family planning services.
- **Social and Behavior Change HIPs** influence knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, and social norms associated with the use of contraception.¹

Additionally, technologies or practices that are typically implemented in conjunction with HIPs to improve impact are referred to as HIP Enhancements. One example of such an enhancement is **Digital Health for Systems**.

implementation through training and public sector assistance, activities included in the **Policy** HIP.³ For example, the Mahefa Miaraka project in Madagascar supports the public health sector to manage a network of community health volunteers as part of a government plan to reduce maternal,

TABLE

Examples of PHE Projects That Include Activities From Two Enabling Environment HIPs

CATEGORY	HIP	PHE PROJECTS
Enabling Environment	Educating Girls Keep girls in school to promote health and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Guraghe People's Self-Help Development Organization (Ethiopia). • Health in Harmony (Indonesia). • Gender, Health, and Conservation Program of the Jane Goodall Institute (multiple countries).
	Policy Develop, implement, and monitor supportive government policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mahefa Miaraka Community Capacity for Health Program of JSI (Madagascar). • HoPE-LVB Project of Pathfinder International (Kenya and Uganda).

Note: This table was generated from a survey that requested PHE projects to self-report the HIPs they implement. Examples of other PHE projects with activities from other selected HIPs can be found in this brief's accompanying web feature.

child, and newborn mortality and morbidity.⁴ This project partners with the Ministry of Public Health and conservation organizations, and is part of the Madagascar PHE network. Thus, community health volunteers are cross-trained on the links between human and ecosystem health.

BOX 2

Community Health Workers as an Entry Point

When supported by other HIPs and HIP Enhancements, the potential effectiveness of **Community Health Workers** (CHWs) increases. Consider using the following to support CHWs:

- **Policy HIP:** If local and national policies prevent CHWs from providing injectable or long-acting reversible contraceptives, target policymakers with advocacy messages.⁵
- **Social Marketing HIP:** When CHWs use social marketing products, the income generated by the sale of the brand-name products can serve as motivation for their work.⁶
- **Digital Health for Systems HIP Enhancement:** CHWs can use mobile phones to enhance their interactions with clients and supervisors and to be up-to-date on contraceptive stock availability.⁷

PHE Projects Could Strengthen Impact by Intentionally Using HIPs

HIPs briefs help the family planning community achieve better outcomes by providing guidance on lessons learned and tips for whom to target and how.

To strengthen the impact of their activities, PHE projects should strategically consider how to leverage the HIPs they currently implement and explore opportunities to strengthen their projects by using additional HIPs (see Box 2). PHE projects should also improve measuring and reporting on any and all use of HIPs.

PHE Projects Enhance the HIP Evidence Base

PHE projects' use of HIPs present a unique learning opportunity for the family planning community because the projects serve remote communities where family planning services are often not accessible. For example, Health of People and Environment in the Lake Victoria Basin (HoPE-LVB) is active in Kenya and Uganda. The project found that over four years (from 2012 to 2016) contraceptive use in project areas increased, on average, by six times in Kenya and three times in Uganda.⁸ Additional analysis could identify which family planning program investments contributed to these project results; this knowledge could then contribute to the HIP evidence base.

While HoPE-LVB did implement family planning activities that reflect elements of HIPs, it did not document this

contribution in its project reports. Intentionally using, measuring, and reporting on HIPs could increase opportunities for PHE projects' family planning results to be recognized by the wider community.

PHE Projects' Intentional Use of HIPs Can Achieve Greater Impact and Build the Evidence Base

This brief serves as a starting point for collaboration between the PHE and family planning communities. Its goal is to encourage conversations about how intentional use of the HIPs can help PHE projects achieve stronger family planning outcomes, and how increased knowledge of PHE projects' family planning work in rural areas can better inform the HIPs. Several recommended actions can promote this collaboration.

Strengthen awareness of HIPs among PHE implementers and advocates.

Greater knowledge of HIPs will help the PHE community strengthen its family planning activities and enable PHE implementers to identify additional ways to improve their family planning work. By sharing lessons learned and best practices, the PHE community can use HIPs to achieve greater family planning impacts.

Advance the best practices of HIP implementation. PHE projects with proven effective family planning practices could promote staff as HIP/PHE champions. Additionally, appointing a PHE champion to the HIP technical advisory group could ensure direct communication between PHE projects and the advisory group, resulting in explicit recognition of how PHE projects use HIP resources with effective outcomes in remote communities.

Measure and report HIP results within PHE projects. PHE project staff could more effectively measure the impact of HIPs they use. Project managers should encourage and support PHE project teams to rigorously measure the impact of HIPs and conduct additional research necessary to identify causal links, benefiting both the family planning and PHE communities. The resulting outcomes would convey the importance of PHE projects' contributions to international family planning goals and strengthen the HIPs evidence base.

CASE STUDY: STRENGTHEN THE TUUNGANE PROJECT BY INTENTIONALLY USING HIPs

The Tuungane PHE project is led by Pathfinder International and The Nature Conservancy in 24 remote villages beside Lake Tanganyika in an ecologically rich area of western Tanzania.⁹ The project aims to improve access to reproductive health services while also assisting community members to better manage natural resources to ensure their livelihoods are sustainable and their community is healthy.¹⁰

An extensive review of Tuungane reports and correspondence with project staff identified components of the project that use elements of HIPs. See this brief's accompanying web feature for details.

How Can Tuungane Strengthen HIPs for Enhanced Results?

The recommendations below suggest a starting point for the project as it continues to strive for strong family planning outcomes as part of its overall objectives. These recommendations also serve as an example of how other PHE projects that currently use elements of HIPs could further strengthen their family planning activities through a more robust application.

Strengthen Social and Behavior Change

The Tuungane project found that although access to and use of contraception has increased in the project area, desired family size has not changed.¹¹ Increasing knowledge about comprehensive reproductive health services and facilitating dialogues about optimal birth spacing for family health and prosperity could help community norms evolve. Strengthening Tuungane's social and behavior change activities may enhance these efforts. Tuungane staff should use the forthcoming **Interpersonal Communication** HIP alongside the **Community Group Engagement** and **Mass Media** HIPs. Additionally, the use of the **Social and Behavior Change** HIPs may facilitate a change in family planning behaviors and the social norms that drive them.¹²

Use HIP Enhancements to Support Community Health Workers and Improve Supply Chain Management

Tuungane staff appreciate the value of digital technology as a cost-effective option for remote support and supervision of CHWs. They have developed mobile applications that allow CHWs to easily access information and accurately enter data about family planning counseling sessions. Tuungane has also developed a mobile application that collects data on contraceptive stock availability to reduce past problems of commodity stock-outs and avoid this issue in the future. PHE projects implementing or hoping to use digital technology—including Tuungane—should consider using the **Digital Health for Systems** HIP Enhancement to improve family planning digital technology options.

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1875 Connecticut Ave., NW
Suite 520
Washington, DC 20009 USA

202 483 1100 PHONE
202 328 3937 FAX
popref@prb.org E-MAIL

